

St. Marys River Management Committee
P.O. Box 251 Folkston, Georgia 31537

MINUTES OF MEETING
March 1, 2004

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC) held its regularly scheduled meeting on March 1, 2004, at the Nassau County Building in Callahan, Fla. Committee members and visitors in attendance are listed on a separate sheet. A quorum of members was present.

Chairman Chip Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m. The minutes from the months of December, January and February were reviewed, corrected, and approved. Winifred Stephenson presented the treasurer's report; the committee's main account has a balance of \$7,268.88. Recent expenditures include a \$54.00 payment to LFC Hosting for web site services and \$149.40 to Rick Walsh for postage.

OLD BUSINESS

St. Mary River Cleanup

Dean Woehrle gave an update on the status of the upcoming river cleanup, which will be held on March 20. Woehrle explained that the cleanup will be very similar to previous years' cleanups. The t-shirts for the cleanup will be ordered at end of this week. Site captains will hand out tickets and trash data forms at each site at the beginning of the cleanup. The tickets will allow the cleanup participants to enter White Oak Plantation for lunch following the cleanup, and the trash data form will allow the participants to receive a t-shirt. White Oak Plantation will be open from 11:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation by Florida Department of Environmental Protection – Watershed Management Plan for Nassau – St. Marys Basin

John Abendroth, environmental consultant with the Watershed Planning and Coordination Section of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, delivered a presentation on the Department's Nassau/St. Marys Watershed Management Plan. (Handouts from the presentation will be maintained on file with the SMRMC secretary.)

Topics covered during the presentation included:

- explanation on the establishment of TMDLs
- definitions of point source and nonpoint source pollution
- definition of the 303d list of impaired waters
- discussion of the Florida Watershed Restoration Act
- definition of Water Body Identification Units (WBIDs)
- summary of basin characteristics
- discussion of the Impaired Waters Rule
- discussion of the data providers for the basin
- discussion of parameters that are considered when determining impairment

- discussion of the difference between the Planning List and the Verified List
- definition of various levels or “categories” of impairment
- discussion of what the next steps in the process are, including public education and awareness

Abendroth explained that the Nassau/St. Marys basin is in Phase Two of the five-phase basin rotation. Abendroth said the St. Marys River “looks pretty good” but mentioned that there are some problems in the Nassau River area.

Winifred Stephenson asked Abendroth for specific sampling requirements (i.e., what are the requirements that must be followed in order for the sample to be considered legitimate and therefore worthy of entry into the database). Abendroth said he did not have the complete requirement list with him but would have someone in the bureau get in contact with her.

Abendroth said there could potentially be four TMDLs in the Nassau Basin and one TMDL in the St. Marys basin required in 2005. Based on a preliminary review of the most recent data assessment, there would possibly be two TMDLs required in 2005 for the Nassau Basin. All of this is subject to change over the next year as additional water quality data is collected.

Abendroth encouraged committee members to contact him if they had any comments or questions.

Stephenson asked what the enforcement process would be if it were determined that there was serious impairment to the river. Abendroth explained that a TMDL would be established, and point source and nonpoint source pollution would have to be identified. Point source polluters would be required to reduce to pollution by specific amounts. Nonpoint source pollution would be examined and broken down by the various types, if possible. Abendroth said it is much more difficult to enforce the cleanup of nonpoint source pollution. Abendroth said that local governments would need to strengthen their stormwater management, but he also stressed that FDEP does not have the authority to control local governments’ planning process.

Paula Staples asked what type of testing FDEP does of stormwater ponds and ditches. Abendroth responded that permits issued by FDEP do not require continued monitoring and evaluation of ponds so there is no consistent testing or monitoring being done.

Stephenson emphasized that the St. Marys basin is threatened more by nonpoint source pollution at this point rather than point source pollution.

Chairman Campbell explained the committee’s efforts at establishing septic setbacks and how many local government officials do not have a firm grasp of water quality issues; they need to be educated on the issues.

Dean Woehrle asked about nonpoint source pollution that comes from wildlife. Abendroth said a management action plan should be established to address the issue. It is difficult to really do much about fecal coliform that comes from wildlife and domesticated animals.

Stephenson asked if FDEP is working with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Abendroth said yes; the FDEP has been able to use some of their samples. However, Georgia's water quality standards are different from Florida's. Florida does not have any way to enforce TMDLs on the Georgia side of the river. Coordination with EPA will be needed to develop and implement TMDLs that occur within interstate jurisdictions.

There was a discussion about the difficulty in determining the source of mercury pollution.

MISCELLANEOUS

Melinda Granlund said there were copies of the St. Marys River Guide available at the front of the room and encouraged members to take them.

Donny Rominger said Camden County is offering a boating safety course on March 23 and 25 from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. It is free to the public and will be held at the Camden County Recreational Center. (Attendance on both nights is required if you want to earn a certificate.)

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.